CBS MEMORANDUM

FROM: Irv Drasnin (CND)
TO: JACK SAMSON
DATE: September 25, 1975

cc See Below*

I regret not being able to respond more quickly to your memo of 12 September 1975, but as I'm sure you know, I've had several pieces of mail to sort out during the past couple of weeks. None, however, should take precedence over yours. The following, I believe, covers the questions you have raised in your note -- from the bottom up.

1. Any questions you have regarding the WCBS-TV softball team should be directed to its manager since there is no connection -- either in policy or personnel -- between WCBS-TV and CBS News (or, for that matter, between WCBS News and CBS News). We are wholly independent news gathering and reporting organizations. We have wholly independent softball teams. You can confirm this with WCBS if you like but I'm also certain that there is no connection between its softball team and its news policies and procedures. Given a sampling of the mail we've received, I'm no longer surprised by the "conspiracy mentality." I am surprised that you would apparently take such thinking seriously.

I share your confidence in the reliability of Associated Press and since you've mentioned it, by any chance did Field and Stream run the AP dispatch of 14 September 1972 (dateline Baltimore, which appeared in the following day's Washington Post). In case you missed it, it named four "ranking staff members" of the National Rifle Association who had been arrested on charges of illegally shooting migratory waterfowl on a commercial shooting preserve in Maryland. Among those named were Cliff Morrow, director of hunting and conservation for the NRA. According to the AP dispatch, illegal baiting practices were allegedly being used. (Please note that in "The Guns of Autumn" we reported only on legal baiting practices.) Admittedly, the court didn't hear the NRA officials' side of the story because they "elected to forfeit the collateral rather than stand trial before a U.S. Magistrate." You might want to follow up on that one since, as a journalist you would surely be concerned with getting to the truth of the matter and I would think you'd find that an interesting story.

2. George Hoover's interpretation of pre-screening policies for CBS News programs is, according to long-standing practice, absolutely correct. Those policies apply equally to all "pressure groups" and vested interests, regardless of the subject matter. In this case, they applied equally to special interests both for and against hunting. Mr. Amory viewed the broadcast (for the first time) on the same day and at the same time that it was viewed by, for example, Mr. Maxwell Rich, head of the NRA. Neither Mr. Amory nor Mr. Rich had, before that time, read one line of script or seen one frame of film -- though both of their organizations, along with many, many others (almost all of which, to one degree or another, support hunting) had been consulted on one or more aspects of the subject. To my knowledge, Ms. Herrington (or any of her staff) did not see the broadcast at all but if they did it was while it was on the air.

If you have in mind the newspaper advertisement paid for by The Fund for Animals and published after the broadcast, you should be aware of the following telegram sent to Mr. Amory by Mr. Leonard and myself on September 6. It read, in its entirety:

"With respect to your newspaper advertisement, "The Guns of Autumn" is not based on your book which was one source among many sources of valuable information on this subject. In fact, 90% of the source material for the broadcast came from hunting literature, hunting organizations and federal and state agencies. We trust that neither in advertising, print or in any other way will you repeat your unjustified claim."

3. Consultation takes many forms, which I will shortly specify. First, contrary to your impression, the broadcast did not "intimate" that preserve shooting "was what all hunters do." To the contrary, it is specifically stated in the narration that "Not every hunter will go to a preserve, but hundreds of thousands do use preserves of all kinds and their number is growing." The source for that information is the North American Game Breeders and Shooting Preserve Operators Association. The Wildlife Management Institute considers the shooting preserve another aspect of game management, or "intensive management on a small scale." (Preserve hunting, by the way, accounts for only one of four segments of the documentary, seventeen and a half out of more than seventy-seven minutes of the broadcast.) The fact is that for information on hunting methods, game management et. al. we did not have to go to another journal or "journalist." We did what any responsible reporter would do: we went directly to the source itself and to the hunter himself.

Among those sources were the Wildlife Management Institute, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the Department of the Interior, the National Rifle Association, the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, the Exotic Wildlife Association, the Utah Wildlife Federation, Winchester-Western, Remington Arms, state game and fish departments and individuals such as A. Starker Leopold and Byron Dalrymple -- among others. Among the books and literature consulted were Game Management, Sand County Almanac, Hunter's Digest, The Hunter's Field Guide, Hunting in America, Meditations on Hunting, North American Big Game, North American Big Game Hunting, The Ben East Hunting Book, Game and the Gunner, the NRA (Denali) Hunting Annuals, Man the Hunter, and the monthly issues of Outdoor Life, Sports Afield, and Petersen's Hunting -- among others.

And, yes, we consulted the monthly issues of Field and Stream -- the same way that presumably hundreds of thousands of hunters do -- by reading it every month. And, as those hunters presumably do, we found much that was of interest -- not because we were looking for anything in particular but because it was there. Perhaps it would be helpful to list just a few examples, taken from but six of your last twelve issues.

(1) "Scrape Hunting for White Tails" (September 1974). It cites the use of tree stands, deer drives and dogs (deer-hunting "southern style") with the added information that deer seasons "in most states are planned to coincide with the rut (mating period) because game biologists and wildlife experts know that white tails are most vulnerable at this time."

(2) "Warm Weather Ducks" (September 1974). This describes the "magic of opening day" and the "joys of great gunning."

(3) "Turkey Fever" (September 1974). This refers to hunting in groups for droves of birds.

(4) "The Dove - Wingshooter's Downfall" (September 1974), describing the firing line of thirty hunters and the noise of gunfire like "popcorn popping."

(5) "The Bow and Big Game" (November 1974), includes more on the use of tree stands. "If you really want to throw the odds for a clean, unhurried shot in your favor, take the time to build a tree stand. Whitetail deer are the real suckers for this ploy, but it works on virtually any big-game animal." There is also a recommendation for the use of "buck and apple scents."

(6) "Turkeys Are Big Game." (November 1974): "And the hardest part about turkey hunting is trying to get to sleep the night before."

(7) "Calling the Bulls -- Bugle the Right Tune and the Elk Come Marching In." (November 1974). This one includes a description of "bush-wacking" an elk at a waterhole, to which the hunter had driven his vehicle.

(8) "The Poaching Game" (November 1974), which could be subtitled, based on the content, "or how to handle the game warden." This is a subject I assume you wouldn't be covering if you didn't find it of wide enough interest.

(9) Your November, 1974 issue also includes pieces on squirrel hunting as a "tune-up" for hunting bigger game in the autumn and on the one-shot antelope hunt, for celebrities.

(10) "Hunting with Hawks" (January 1975), a hunting practice almost as old as hunting in private preserves.

(11) "The Decoy and Call -- Key to Waterfowling" (January 1975) which is illustrated with hunters in white camouflage suits, which hide them from geese, and includes the author's boast: "Fifteen minutes by car from my home in Houston I can be shooting at ducks and geese and the famous Eagle Lake rice field-prarie country is only another forty-five minutes away. About 150,000 waterfowl winter within 50 miles of Houston."

(12) "Boar Hunting With Dogs" (January 1975), refers to a dog that was used on the Y.O. Ranch to track down scores of wounded game inside that shooting preserve. That would seem to support the argument preserve hunters and owners made to us that it is actually the more humane way of hunting because wounded and crippled game won't escape.

(13) "Super Swan" (January 1975) is a long punt-type low freeboard craft in the shape of a huge water bird in which waterfowl hunters can sit -- a man inside a huge decoy, as it were.

(14) "On Spotlighting" (July 1975). According to this article, "a lot of morons jacklight deer," enough to make it "a serious national problem." Texas alone, says the author, estimates an illegal kill of 150,000 deer annually, and that state game wardens can't control it. "No one anywhere knows with any certainty what the illegal kill is. By its nature it conceals itself. Estimates run from 10% to 100% of the area's (Missouri) legal kill, with most estimates in the 20 to 30 percent range." The article states, "there are three major types of poaching in most states" and it then goes on to cite the problems in state after state. We probably should have covered this, but we were trying to avoid the "excesses" of hunting.

(15) "Bluffing the Big Buck Antelope" (July 1975). The picture accompanying this article is an antelope as seen through the cross-hairs of a rifle -- similar, say, to the slide used in "The Guns of Autumn." The article describes the guidelines for good trophy heads and what the author says was "one of the most exciting stalks he had ever experienced." He drove a vehicle to within 400 yards of the animal. He doesn't say exactly how long the stalk took, but he describes the kill three paragraphs after saying it has taken fifteen minutes (to get less than 300 yards from the antelope). Can we assume it has taken him another fifteen minutes before firing, a half hour? The article also cites the relative advantages of taking a pronghorn before and after mating: "The more he mates, the more pooped he becomes."

(16) "Not Blind Luck Alone" (July 1975). The author refers to "those secret streams," those places off the beaten track, as "a brand of gunning we now associate with the good old days -- and which too few outdoorsmen enjoy anymore." It also states: "Today very little of the country's best waterfowl habitat is available or accessible to the average hunter. Because of the demand for quality duck hunting, most of the finest marshes and waterways are leased, rented, or owned outright by shooting clubs with limited and often expensive memberships."

(17) "Train Yourself to Retrieve Ducks" (September 1975). The author states that the losses for all forms of duck hunting nationwide are estimated at more than 25 percent and that "Shockingly, this waste is generally accepted as inevitable." Our mistake again; we should have covered this one too.

(18) "Hunting the Hard Country" (September 1975 -- by Jack Samson). I'll let you describe it. "The hunters with the welded tubing towers built up on jeeps and pick-ups...riflemen in the high deer towers dotting the rolling country...decoys on the ranch ponds...Some of the deer hunters go out before dawn to climb into the elevated blinds...The shooting time is brief before a guide or ranch hand comes rattling down one of the red dusty roads to pick up the hunter an hour or so after sunrise...Pickup trucks and jeeps are rigged with seats for two hunters right over the front bumpers (to hunt quail)... latter day Texas hunters have devised a buzzer system, activated by a push-button switch in the tower. When the hunter on top spots a quail covey, he pushes the switch and the buzzer sounds in the cab. At the sound the driver -- who has been inching along the rutted trails in low gear -- jams on the breaks." And the talk at night, of the game shot that day, sounds very much like the talk I heard at the bear hunter's camp in Michigan.

(19) "About Caribou Hunting (September 1975). An interesting bit of philosophy is expressed in this one, which I can only assume is typical of hunters and, by the way, is almost exactly what the preserve hunters said to me in Michigan: "An expensive hunt that is successful is better than a 'cheapie' that uses up your precious vacation and nets you nothing but discomfort. Each hunter must assess his own objectives, capabilities, and resources and decide what's best for him." Does that apply to all hunters, Jack? (The hunters filmed at Louie's would disagree on one point. They say it's cheaper to spend one day at Louie's than a week outside a preserve "where you might not get anything.")

(20) "Best Hunting Hot Spots," a frequent feature, tells hunters the best places to go for a successful hunt, in every state. The best advice for going where the game is, I assume, Jack, is meant for the average hunter, the typical hunter. But it sounds like it's pretty crowded out there because, for waterfowling in Maryland, for example, the advice is: "make plans well in advance to get in on the action."

There were many other articles of interest. For instance, the conservation articles of Michael Frome -- until, inexplicably, they were discontinued; or the piece on National Hunting and Fishing Day by Bob Delfay of the National Shooting Sports Foundation; or the articles recommending the best kinds of vehicles to use, and airplanes (there was nothing about spotting, chasing or shooting wildlife from airplanes, but I understand from the Law Enforcement Division of the Department of Interior that it is a problem); your editorials on the "anti-gun, anti-hunting conspiracy;" and on the need for gutting, "dressing," the animal in the field to prevent spoilage of the meat (we did mention that, along with the other reason given us by every hunter we encountered, namely that it reduces the weight of the animal by 10-15 percent and "makes it easier to carry out of the woods.").

Finally, there are the advertisements running every month in Field and Stream: all the latest technology in rifles, guns and scopes, and ammunition; the lures, calls, scents and soaps (like Mate-Triks, for example); the lures and feed to "attract and hold game;" information on breeding game birds; the dogs and ways to train them. It's all in there, Jack, for the hunter and for the reporter.

You can also find in the ads, hunts with bait and with hounds, hunts with 4-wheel drive vehicles, fly-in hunts and combination hunts, guaranteed hunts and the ads for the shooting preserves. Dave Petzal could only think of one to recommend (Calloway Gardens, a bird preserve in Georgia). But the back of your magazine lists many, many more for both big game and exotics and for birds; in Texas, Pennsylvania, Florida etc., and even in Michigan, namely, Louie's Big Game Shooting Preserve and Hunt Club. Really, Jack, you can look it up.

This is just a sampling, and a small sampling at that. It could be multiplied ad infinitum using the issues of Field and Stream, Outdoor Life and Sports Afield alone. Yes, Jack, Field and Stream did have something to do with the input for what you call "that piece of propaganda." Propaganda, Jack, is your word, not mine.

*Messrs. Backe, Hoover, Leonard, O'Neill, Suhler